



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

OCT 27, 1998

Dear School Food Authority:

The Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service and the Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would like to encourage you to promote and offer 1 percent low fat and/or fat free (skim) milk in your schools, while continuing to offer a variety of milk, particularly for those students whose health may be compromised by a low fat product. As you know, healthy eating patterns in childhood and adolescence promote optimal child health and help prevent both immediate and long term health problems. Milk makes a significant contribution to the nutrient content of school meals. Milk is a good source of high quality protein, and provides high levels of calcium, phosphorus and riboflavin as well. Each of these nutrients is important in the diets of growing children. However, whole milk and 2 percent reduced fat milk can still make a notable contribution to the fat and saturated fat content of a meal.

Offering 1 percent or fat-free milk is an easy way to cut total and saturated fat from children's diets and school lunch menus, while maintaining the nutritional benefits that milk brings to meals. In 1995, in response to a 1994 Congressional mandate, USDA modified the National School Lunch Program regulations to allow for a greater variety of milk types to be offered to children, including low fat milk. A recent Food and Drug Administration revision of milk labeling requirements permits schools to offer skim or 1 percent milk and meet the low fat milk requirement in the school meals programs.

Giving up fat does not have to mean giving up taste. Many schools have incorporated low fat and fat free milk into their meal services, and have found that students are accepting the change. At the same time, schools striving to meet the goals of the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children could benefit by simply offering lower fat milk selections.

We encourage you to not only offer 1 percent and or fat-free milk in your schools, but to conduct educational programs or promotional activities to encourage students to choose lower fat milk at school and at home. This is one simple change that may prove to be a very important step toward healthy eating and better health for our Nation's children and youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Shirley R. Watkins".

Shirley R. Watkins
Under Secretary
Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services
Department of Agriculture

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "William H. Dietz".

William H. Dietz, M.D., Ph.D.
Director
Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity
National Center for Chronic Disease
Prevention and Health Promotion
Department of Health and Human Services